

# GENERAL BY-LAWS OF THE ONTARIO FALL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

(Revised August 2024)

## SECTION 1.0 - DEFINITIONS

**1.01** In these by-laws and other by-laws of the league, unless the context otherwise specifies or requires:

- a) **“OFFL”** means the Ontario Fall Football League which is overseen by the Ontario Community Football League (OCFL)
- b) **By-laws** mean any by-law of the league, including any special by-law, from time to time in force and effect
- c) The singular shall include the plural and the plural shall include the singular, the masculine shall include the feminine
- d) **“Member Club”** means an organization/association who has been duly admitted into the membership of the OFFL
- e) **“Executive”** means the elected Officers of the OFFL
- f) **“Division”** specifies age and mode of play, that is 6, 9 or 12 person(s) aside
- g) **“FO”** means Football Ontario, the provincial sport governing body

## SECTION 2.0 – COMPETITION COMMITTEE

**2.01** The Competition Committee is a group of OFFL Member Clubs or other volunteers approved by the OFFL Executive that assist with the league’s administration on behalf of the Member Clubs with the following guidelines:

- a) The competition committee shall be formed at the AGM each year and have a one-year term.
- b) The committee shall be chaired by one member of the OFFL Executive Committee.
- c) Any decisions or recommendations will be decided by simple majority vote and presented to the OFFL Board of Directors for approval if required.

**2.02** The duties of the Competition Committee are:

- a) Annual review and updating of all OFFL playing rules
- b) Tiering of divisions each season including definition and updating of the criteria used for assessing teams
- c) Making any adjustments to tiers at the end of the regular season prior to playoffs (moving teams up or down a tier)
- d) Review all Champ Day applications and making a recommendation to the OFFL Executive
- e) Any other administrative tasks as requested by the OFFL Executive Committee or Member Clubs

### **SECTION 3.0 - RESIDENTIAL GUIDELINES**

**3.01** All Member Clubs must abide by and act consistently with a player's primary residency with respect to player registration as follows:

- a) To register with an association, all players should be encouraged to play in the centre in which they hold official residence unless they live in an area deemed open or receive a release from the league.
- b) Subject to Section 3.01, once players have registered with their centre they should not play for any other centre in that year, unless the team in their original centre is disbanded or a familial move necessitates. It is expected that centres speak to each other in these situations.
- c) In all cases where a centre is approached by a player or his/her parents or guardians, who resides in another center's boundaries, said centre provide the player with the contact information for the centre in which they reside. That centre should advise the parent(s) there is a centre closer to where they reside. If the parent(s) elect to another centre (outside of their area) the player will be permitted to play outside their area.
- d) If the player / parents or guardian choose to register with another centre outside the territory in which they reside, necessitating a move away from their home centre, the centre the player is going to must reach out to the player's home centre for a conversation. The goal is to have as many players involved in football as possible and all centres should support players participating where they would like. they must receive a release from the league. The player / parent(s) must request a release in writing. To align with FO policy the league will grant a release unless any of the following apply:
  - i) The player owes fees to the Member Club they no longer wish to play for
  - ii) The player has equipment that has not been returned to a Member Club they no longer wish to play for
  - iii) The player was actively recruited away from the club (see recruiting policy below)
  - iv) As a result of the player leaving the departed Member club can no longer field a team in that age division (minimum roster numbers)
- e) Subject to Section 3.01, a player who was registered and played with a OFFL association in the prior OFFL season, moves residence from that OFFL area to the territory of another OFFL Member Club shall, within the first year, have the right to choose either their former association or their new home association to register with, without the need of a release from his/her home association. It is understood that centres will speak to each other in these cases. However, in the following year, they must play where they live and shall not play for any other territory unless by written release.
- f) Exceptions:
  - i. "Sibling Rule" – Families are encouraged to play together, even if those players are playing in centres that are outside their home area. The goal is to keep families playing together. If a family elects to have one player in their home area but another in a Member Club outside their area, it is understood this is the parents' decision. Centres are expected to communicate with each other.

ii. Players who reside in a centre which does not field a team in their age group may play for any centre. Once the centre, in which said player resides, fields a team in said player's age group, said player has the option to continue to play in the centre in which he/she was registered. Should the player decide, at any time, to return to the centre in which they live, a written release shall be granted by the centre where said player was registered.

**3.02** Open territories are all other areas not covered by an Association registered with OFFL (listed in section 3.02 above). In the event an association does not field a team in a division that association's territory is open for the current season only.

**3.03** It is the objective of OFFL to provide football to as many players and centres as possible and accordingly will encourage and help any new centres that may be interested in forming teams. If an association registers enough players from a geographical "open" territory to form a team, the association may apply to OFFL to have the territory protected.

**3.04** All new Member Clubs that enter a team into OFFL will be given protected geographical areas. Any players who were registered in an "open" area that now includes the new Member Club's protected area may register with the new association or register with the association with which he/she played in the immediate preceding second ("grandfathering").

**3.05** It is a breach of the FO code of ethics to recruit a player enrolled in another program, or a prospective athlete who has avowed his/her intention to enroll in another program. The OFFL also considers recruiting players from within another Member Club's territorial boundary as a violation. Any violation requires documented evidence be submitted to the league.

For any occurrence that the league deems in violation of the recruiting policy the following penalties shall apply:

#### **Association violations**

1<sup>st</sup> offence - \$500 fine to the Member Club payable immediately to the OFFL and the player must remain that season with their home centre

2<sup>nd</sup> offence - \$1,000 fine to the Member Club payable immediately to the OFFL, membership placed on probation, player must remain that season with their home centre, recommendation sent to the FO that the President of the Member Club be suspended for one (1) year. Details of repeated recruiting offence shared with the Ontario Spring Football League

3<sup>rd</sup> offence – \$1,500 fine to the Member Club payable immediately to the OFFL, membership in the OFFL put on probation, player must remain that season with their home centre, player must remain that season with their home centre, recommendation sent to FO that the President of the Member Club be suspended for one (1) year. Details of repeated recruiting offence shared with the Ontario Summer Football League (OSFL).

#### **Coaches violations (includes head coaches and assistant coaches)**

1<sup>st</sup> offence – coach suspended for four (4) games, association fined \$500, player in question is suspended 2 games and not granted a release to play out of territory

2<sup>nd</sup> offence – coach suspended for one (1) year, all other penalties outlined for the association and player for the 2<sup>nd</sup> offence under association violations above

**SECTION 4.0 - TEAM NAMES, COLOURS AND SPONSORS**

**4.01** All member Associations must declare their full team names at the Annual General Meeting.

**4.02** All associations will declare the colours of their home jerseys upon initial registration with OFFL and update this information each year at the time teams are declared. If there is a conflict in colour of jerseys, the home team must wear white or a different colour. The colours of jerseys are as follows:

<b>Team Name</b>	<b>Pants</b>	<b>Shirts (home/away)</b>	<b>Helmets</b>
Brantford Bisons	Black	Red	Black
Burlington Stampeders	Black	Red	White
Cambridge Lions	Gold	Scarlet	Gold
Clarington Knights	Black	Grey/Black	Black
Durham Dolphins	White	Aqua/White	White
Guelph Jr Gryphons	Gold	Gold	Gold
Hamilton Jr Ticats	Black	Black	Black
Mississauga Huskies	Grey	Navy	Navy
Niagara Generals	Black	Black	Black
Oakville Titans	Black	Black	Silver
Orangeville Outlaws	Black	Black	Silver
Oshawa Hawkeyes	Navy	Navy/White	Navy
Peel Panthers	Black	Black	Black
Quinte Skyhawks	Black	Black or White	Black
Scarborough Thunder	Black	Black/White	Purple
Vaughan Rebels	Navy	White	Navy
Waterloo Predators	Black	White	Purple
York Lions	Black	White/ Red	White

**4.03** When a new association registers with OFFL it will register its colours, which must be different than those already in use by existing association members unless approved by the Board of Directors.

**4.04** Teams wishing to use sponsors are permitted to use names or logos of the sponsor provided:

- a) Names do not exceed a height of 3 inches (back of jersey only)
- b) Logos are not to exceed a height of 5 inches and are to appear on the shoulders or chest

**4.05** If a team has two sets of jerseys, the home team must comply with visiting team's colour selection.

## **SECTION 5.0 - PLAYER ELIGIBILITY AND REGISTRATION**

**5.01** All players must first be registered with the association in which he/she plays for before registering with OFFL.

**5.02** OFFL and the associations within OFFL reserve the right to request that any player obtain a written statement from a medical doctor qualified to practice in Ontario certifying that there is no medical reason which prevents the player from participating in the game of tackle football. In the event a medical certificate is requested, a player may not register with OFFL, or if registered, continue to practice or play for a OFFL Member Club unless and until the requested certificate has been received by OFFL or the Member Club confirming there is no medical reason preventing the player from participating in the game of tackle football. A copy of all such certificates shall be given to the OFFL Registrar for filing as soon as possible after having been received.

**5.03 The ages and divisions of play approved by the OFFL are:**

<b>DIVISION</b>	<b>AGE (including birth year for the 2024 season)</b>
<b>U10</b>	<b>Under 10 (born 2015/2016) 6 v 6</b>
<b>U12</b>	<b>Under 12 (born 2013/2014) 9 v 9</b>
<b>U14</b>	<b>Under 14 (born 2011/2012) 12 v 12</b>

**5.04** A player's age is determined as at midnight of December 31<sup>st</sup> of the current playing season.

**5.05** Ages are to be verified by birth or baptismal certificate or registration, naturalization papers, Ontario Health Card with photo or valid passport.

**5.06** Each player must have two copies of their picture at registration which will remain with the Associations with OFFL's Registrars. Pictures supplied must be current, recognizable in a clear and visible photo, color preferred.

**5.07** The registration cutoff will be Sunday midnight of the third week of the current playing season and thereafter no further registration is possible and none will be accepted unless:

- a) Additions are necessary to maintain roster size as at Sunday midnight of the third week
- b) The added player(s) is eligible to play at least three (3) regular season games before the playoffs.

OFFL prefers a valid driver's license of a guardian or parent for residency. Failing a driver's license, OFFL will accept an OHIP card or current utility bill. This issue will be dealt with at OFFL level, not at field level.

**5.08** Players may play up a division if he/she is within one year of the age requirement of that division with written permission from a parent or guardian. These players must be in their last year of eligibility for their own division (from age standpoint) and under no circumstance may a player play down a division from the one for which he/she is registered. Once a player has dressed for or participated in any way in 3 or more games in the upper division, the player must remain in the upper division for the balance of the season including playoffs. Such action must also be approved by Football Ontario

**5.09** Member Clubs may at their discretion create an U10 team that is made up of players at the U8 and U10 age level if that association is not able to field U10 team with sufficient players in the U10 age group.

## **SECTION 6.0 - SEASON SCHEDULE**

**6.01** Playing dates of importance include:

- a) The regular and play-off season for will be completed by the second weekend in November.
- b) The first game for the divisions shall be played no sooner than the first weekend of August.
- c) Games will be scheduled and played on weekends and holiday Mondays.
- d) The scheduler may schedule other mid-week games, but only if necessary to complete a schedule.

**6.02** Starting times and dates are subject to change by mutual agreement of the center Presidents involved and the scheduler's approval.

**6.03** Any team not on the field and ready to play 15 minutes after the scheduled kick-off or after any delay in the previous game may default the game at the Board of Directors discretion. If there are delays due to transportation issues the registrar will be notified immediately and will communicate with the home team. If it is possible the game will be played unless there are field restrictions. Registrar and or President's decision is the final as to whether the game will be played. Referee's do not have the final decision in this matter.

**6.04** Playoffs will be scheduled with the following items of notes:

- a) All Season finals will be played as a triple-header at a site to be determined by the Board of Directors if applicable.
- b) Championship Days will be held at a field agreed to by the Board of Directors. Neutral officials will be used with no official officiating more than two games.
- c) Officials should be advised of overtime procedures for Playoff and Championship games as follows: *"In the event that the score is tied at the end of the second half of a game each team will be given the opportunity to score using the following procedure. The first team, as determined by a coin toss, shall scrimmage the ball at the opponent's 35-yard line, and may advance by consecutive series of downs until it makes a score or loses the possession. The second teams will then scrimmage at the same 35 yard line and proceed as above. If the score is still tied the procedure shall be repeated until a winner is declared after both teams have had equal opportunities."* White Book Rules

**6.05** Ties for playoff positions will be broken by the following formula:

- a) Head to head (wins/loses).
- b) Head to head (total point differential).
- c) Total points for and against (no more than 15 point spread per game) with common opponent.
- d) Flip of coin (tie for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> only).
- e) If a tie for the final play-off position cannot be resolved by criteria a, b, or c, then a qualification game will be held. In this case the flip of a coin will determine home field.

**6.06** Protests must be addressed using the following process:

1. All protests must be lodged by phone with the Registrar by an Association Executive member (other than the coaches involved) within 24 hours of the game having been completed.
2. Protests must be followed by a letter and a cheque for \$100.00 dated within 5 days of the game.
3. Protest cheque is not refundable if the protest is lost.
4. Any Executive member of the League's Board of Directors cannot be a member of the protest committee if their team is involved in the protest.

**6.07** Every effort must be made to play each scheduled game and in the event of a game not played, every effort is made to reschedule. In the case of a default:

- a) Defaulting team is responsible for their costs and those of their opponent with receipt backup.
- b) If either team fails to notify the opponent team of a cancellation, 72 hours in advance of the scheduled game time, the team that fails to notify shall be responsible for the direct incurred costs of the opponent for that game and any extra direct incurred costs of the opponent for the re-scheduled game. The costs will be determined based on receipts provided by the opponent. The 72-hour Cancellation is not applicable due to any act of God, such as, but not limited to flooding or act of vandalism. The canceling center may be asked to provide confirmation of said cancellation.
- c) If the teams are notified in time (72 hours prior to game time) the game will be rescheduled without penalty.
- d) Any team that intentionally defaults a game is automatically eliminated from postseason play upon a majority vote of the Board of Directors and the standings are adjusted accordingly. The member club may also be subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 if a team does not show up for a league scheduled game without prior communication to the league and approval from the league.
- e) The score of a defaulted game is 15-0.

**6.08** Member organizations may charge a gate fee to their games during the OFFL season.

Gate fees are limited to \$5 maximum per adult (players, coaches, children 13 and younger, and seniors 65 and older are to be admitted free of charge for all games).

Championship gate fee will be \$10.

## **SECTION 7.0 - RESCHEDULING OF GAMES**

**7.01** When an OFFL game requires re-scheduling it is responsibility of the HOME team to negotiate a suitable date with the visiting team. It is then the HOME team's Association President's responsibility to notify the Scheduler or League President. The Scheduler or League President will then confirm this information with the visiting team's Association President.

**7.02** Both associations are urged to arrange to play the outstanding game at a mutually agreeable date. Should no date be mutually agreeable within three (3) days of the original game, the Scheduler or League President may set the date at his/her discretion or form a committee to help do so. In the event the Scheduler or League President's team is involved, an appropriate League Executive must deal with the issue.

**7.03** In normal circumstance the Home team shall maintain their home field advantage. Any additional costs incurred by either team will be dealt with on an individual basis

## **SECTION 8.0 – TIERED LEVELS OF PLAY**

**8.01** The OFFL will separate teams into as many as three tiers at each age group with a goal of balanced, competitive games at all levels of play:

- a) Tier 1 – Highest level of competition, rep level travel football
- b) Tier 2 – High level of competition, rep level travel football
- c) Tier 3 – Competitive football with a focus on development, regional schedule (if possible) to limit travel

**8.02** The Competition Committee is responsible for selecting the teams for each tier of play each season after the team declaration deadline

**8.03** Each Tier 1 team shall have at least one cross-over game against a Tier 2 opponent, and if the schedule requires it Tier 2 teams may have cross-over games against Tier 3 opponents

**8.04** At the discretion of the Competition Committee a team may move up a tier or down a tier at the completion of the regular season for the start of the playoffs

**8.05** In a season where the number of teams in a given age division do not allow for three tiers, the competition U10, U12 and U14, age divisions will have no less than two tiers. U8 will be flag only, focused on development.